

Jackie and

Fourth in a Series

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"Oh, Mary," Jackie asked with a girlish smile, "do you suppose I could take you up on your invitation and come out to your house tomorrow with the children? Caroline says she wants to see Tom Kitten, and I'd like so much to just spend a nice quiet day with the children before leaving for India."

It was a year since our original plans for such a day together had been canceled because of a social commitment. But I never dreamed that, when Jackie promised "We'll do it another day," she would choose a time like this. I was both happy and proud that she was even considering the visit, but I was simply dumbfounded! My house had been getting along without me—while I slept at the White House—and who knew how it looked?

Jackie set the approximate time of their arrival at "somewhere around 3:30—after the children have had their naps."

My thoughts raced furiously over the next 24-hour span, and I found myself compelled to ask a much-dreaded question, considering the amount of unfinished business before me. But I had no choice.

"Would you allow me the day off tomorrow, Jackie?" I asked. "I'll need a little time for preparations, you know."

She readily agreed, of course, and I was grateful. To have asked for a day off for any other reason, when she was due to start a trip such as this, would have been sheer folly.

It's one thing to work for a First Lady, but quite another to have her come to your house!

At home, I quickly changed into comfortable work clothes, and found myself working almost around the clock. It was to be a casual affair, of course, so I had suggested to Jackie that she "just come in slacks." And she, in turn, urged me "not to fuss . . . we can have hamburgers for dinner."

Despite her other suggestion that I just serve hamburgers, the meal I had planned was to suit my Italian taste: rigatoni macaroni and meatballs, Southern fried chicken, salad platter, stuffed celery, relishes, Italian bread and butter, Chianti wine, milk for the children, dessert, and coffee.

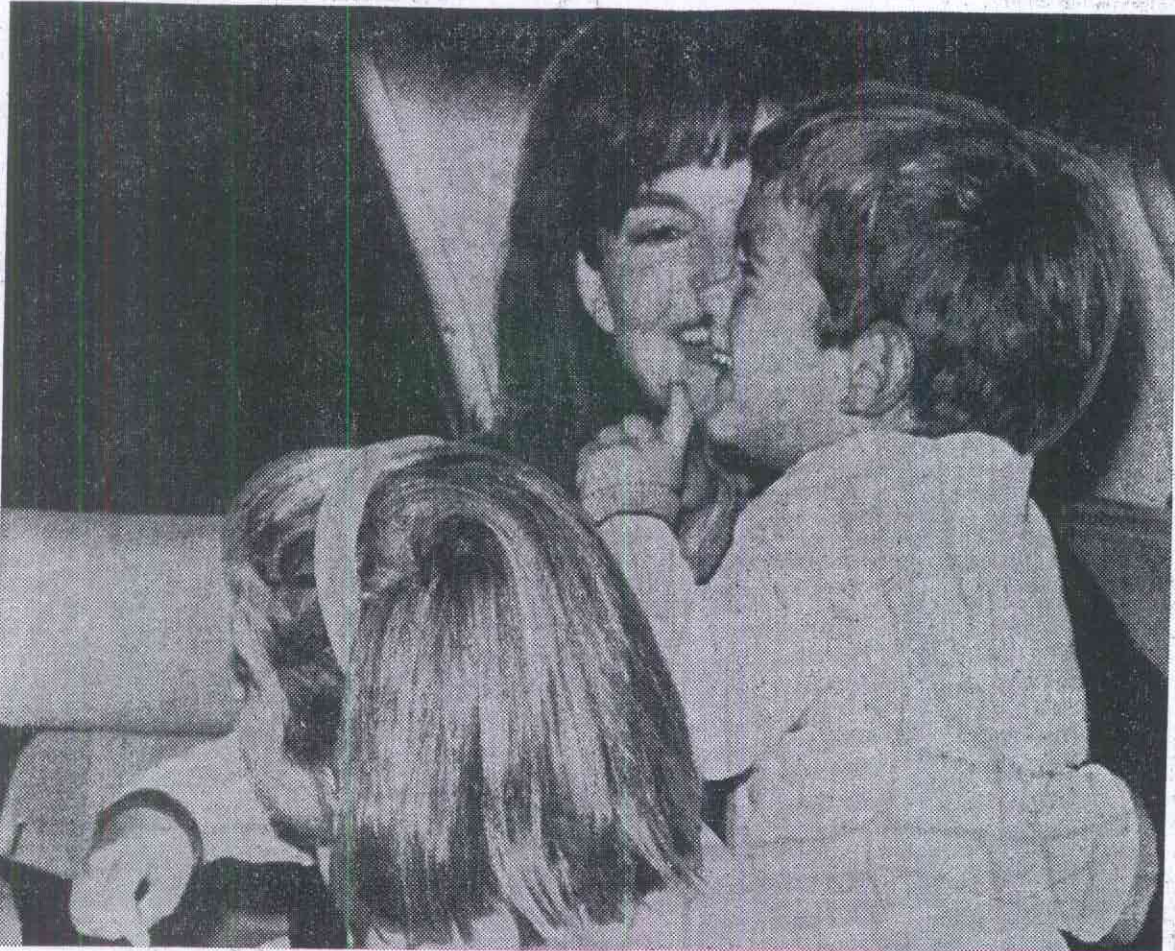
Tom Kitten, completely oblivious of the honor being bestowed on him on this exciting day, was spending the afternoon on his favorite bed upstairs, snoozing away!

To complete the family picture waiting for the arrival of our "special guests," there was Ray, who had declared a holiday for himself, as well as my mother-in-law, Ann Gallagher.

At 3:30 p.m. Jackie's station wagon was pulling up in front of the house—she was prompt to the minute.

She, wearing slacks too, and with John-John in her

the Kids: Guests on the Way



Associated Press

Jacqueline with Caroline and John-John in 1963.

arms and Caroline following, got out of the car and made her way up the twenty steps to our front door. Behind them came the two Secret Service agents, lugging the empty pram up to the front porch, then returning to the sidewalk to keep watch outdoors.

Entering the living room, Jackie immediately made my pace-setting record seem a triumph. With one quick glance around, her first words were: "Oh, Mary, how pretty!"

If I could only rest a few minutes, I'd revive, I thought, happily anticipating the next hour, when we

would simply sit and relax with a nice drink before dinner.

But what was she saying? Before relinquishing her coat, Jackie asked casually, "Mary, it's such a nice day . . . do you suppose we could go for a little walk before we get our boots off?"

There was *snow* underfoot! And, just the thought of going into it for more exercise practically numbed me. I looked at the chair.

"Just give me a minute to get my boots on," I ventured, "and I'll be right with you."

"If I could only rest a few minutes, I'd revive, I thought, happily anticipating the next hour, when we would simply sit and relax with a nice drink before dinner."

for the Day

What a picture we made. Caroline, Chris, and Greg trotted merrily ahead, while the two Secret Service agents followed at a discreet distance behind.

As I headed for the kitchen, I suggested to Jackie that she make herself comfortable in the living room with a magazine. Instead, she grabbed a magazine, and followed me into the kitchen, exclaiming rather breathlessly. "Oh, Mary, your wallpaper is so beguiling!" And then she chose a chair at the kitchen table.

As I prepared the food, we were joined by the children, as well. John-John came crawling in on all fours, and my first thought was to manipulate him to a spot out of harm's way.

Remembering an old Italian custom, I reached for the bread drawer, ripped off the "heel" from a loaf of Italian bread, placed it in his hands, then propped him up on the floor beside his mother's chair. This would, I knew, keep him happily occupied for a little while.

"Mmm-mmm, that looks good, Mary," Jackie said, "could I have some, too?"

"Why, sure," I answered, and with another strong twist at the bread handed *her* a chunk to munch on. "Would you like a nice glass of Chianti to go with it?" I offered.

"No, thanks, but if you have some milk to spare, I'll take a glass."

There was plenty of milk and, after placing a tumblerful before her, I couldn't help feeling that she was thoroughly enjoying this rare chance to be sitting at an ordinary kitchen table.

The tranquil kitchen scene was shattered when suddenly three noisy, energetic children entered, "following the leader" from the floor onto a stool, to the top of the kitchen counter, down to the stool again, with a jump to the floor.

Then, a quick run around through the rooms, shrieking with joy, and back to the kitchen again for another stool-to-counter session, which stopped only when they ran out of wind. Since Jackie didn't stop Caroline, I didn't stop my two, either.

For the children, the rigatoni was easy to manage. When it came to the fried chicken, I suggested they "just pick it up and eat it with your fingers."

Jackie seemed pleased and exclaimed, "Oh, great, Caroline—we can eat it like we do when we're on a picnic!"

Toward the end of the meal, Tom Kitten was allowed to join Caroline at the table. Sitting on the chair beside her, he nibbled at the little bits of chicken she handed him, and she laughed each time he licked her fingers.

By 6:30 or so, their little visit had come to an end and, thanking us "for such a good time," they slipped away as quietly and unnoticed as they had arrived.